

DCFS adoption worker knows life as adoptive mom

As an Adoption Specialist, Nancy Kulppi, a 14-year DCFS veteran, knows adoption from the outside looking in. As an adoptive mother to Molly, now an adult with children of her own, Nancy also knows adoption from the inside out. Her appreciation of foster care and adoption is heightened by being on both the professional and personal sides.

Nancy first welcomed Molly into her home as a 10-day-old infant in foster care. She was already a mother to her then two-year-old son and a daughter who died as an infant. After Molly came, another daughter was born.

It was easy to fall in love with Molly, but a tougher fight to become a permanent family. Since Molly was born to a Native American mother on a reservation in Northern Michigan, there were legal complications with moving to permanency. Nancy had to make a solid commitment to preserve Molly Ann's heritage in accordance with federal laws.

"That turned out to be the greatest blessing and humbling experience for all of us. Molly's culture caused us all to investigate who Native Americans really

are and to learn of their pain, suffering and achievements during the process of searching for Molly's roots," Nancy recalled.

"It is a remarkable thing to give a home to a child who really needs your help. If you make the choice to adopt, what that child ends up teaching you with his/her personality, creativity and talents is priceless."

*Nancy Kulppi
DCFS adoption worker and
and adoptive parent*

As the family grew closer, Nancy also did some soul searching. She believes that adopting Molly helped her measure the love she has for all children and process where that love comes from.

"Molly made me discover the importance of other heritages and races and helped me understand what part of us is our roots, our upbringing, what comes from our natural parents and what influence we've gotten from the

people who raised us. But mostly, adopting Molly helped me see that despite these external factors, we can still choose who and how we want to be, no matter what the situation," Nancy said.

Having been on both sides of adoption, her hope for prospective adoptive families is that they would be the kind of people who learn from their mistakes. They should also be fully aware that adoption is a lifetime permanent relationship and should accept it as such.

For her own family, Molly's impact was immediate and lasting. She gave the family more spirit and life. Nancy remembered that by the time Molly could talk, she was witty, humorous, and could charm the socks off anyone. She has also grown to be a tremendously loyal daughter and sister.

"It is a remarkable thing to give a home to a child who really needs your help," said Nancy. "And, if you make the choice to adopt, what that child ends up teaching you with his/her personality, creativity and talents is priceless. However, it isn't always easy, but then again, anything worth having never is."

Cook South foster parents are special in May and every month

May, Foster Parent Appreciation Month, is again upon us. It is a special month for you and for the staff here at Cook South. This month gives our staff an additional opportunity to thank you for the support you have given to us throughout the year and the services you have provided to the children we serve.

The administrative staff here at Cook South would like to thank you for responding when we call. Whether it was for the placement of a child, a committee that needed your input, or participation in a program, you have been there. You should be recognized every day for your dedication and willingness to work with us.

You are a vital part of this team that provides for the safety and well-being of children. You, who have the responsibility for the daily care and supervision of our children, provide us with valuable information for assuring that they receive the services they need. Without you, we could not be successful.

So, from all of us at Cook South, thank you for the wonderful work that you do and the support you give us, not just this month, but every day!

Lorne Garrett
Regional Administrator

Cook North thanks parents for helping win Foster Care Plan award

The Cook North region won an award for our score on the 2003 Foster Parent Law Implementation Plan. While it was accepted with great pride, we know that the plan is only as worthy as the satisfaction our foster families find in our actions. Each year we draft the implementation plan with foster parents and for the foster parents caring for children.

Our sincere hope is that you have found working with the DCFS staff and the private agencies in this region to be helpful, encouraging, and even inspirational. At the very least, please know that you have our gratitude and respect for the incredibly complicated and often misunderstood



Chris McGrath, Jackie Bright, Sari Rowitz and Kathy Bilbo, DCFS Cook North

role that you play in child welfare. Without you, children's lives would be much emptier and our job would be much harder.

We honor you in the month of May, but we appreciate you each day.

Chris McGrath
Regional Administrator

Thank you from Cook Central Region

The entire team in the Cook Central Region thanks



all of the foster parents in the DCFS supervised homes and those who work with us through private agencies. You have persevered through many transitions affecting the region, and yet remained committed to the children in your care. I understand that the DCFS structure can sometimes seem complex, but I

trust that more often than not, you find it supportive of your needs.

Based on the feedback from the regional survey, in many ways we are meeting the mark, but we still must pay attention to the work that remains. Please know that I will remain diligent, along with the rest of the DCFS Cook Central staff and our private agency partners, to ensure we work as a team to positively change the lives entrusted to us. Thank you sincerely for your invaluable contribution.

Marilyn Hyde
Acting Regional Administrator

Famous individuals know foster care firsthand

Tough times as a child did not keep these individuals from success. In some ways time in foster care taught them valuable lessons that helped them later. You can read more about the lives of these famous individuals who know life in foster care first hand at the website www.fosterclub.com.

Cher

Cher, Cherilyn Sarkasian LaPiere was born on May 20, 1946 in El Centro, California. She was an only child to an aspiring actress. When Cher was 2 years old, her mother was overcome by illness. At the time, she was a single mother, so Cher was sent to spend time in an orphanage. After she was able to return home, Cher spent a lot of time with her grandmother while her mother worked.

Watching her mother work instilled a love of performance in Cher. As a teen she dreamed of being a star. Her dream continues with a career in music and film.

Eddie Murphy

Comedian and actor Eddie Murphy was just 8 years old when he and his brother were sent to a foster home because of his mother's illness. Although he stayed in foster care for just about one year, he credits the experience with helping him develop a sense of humor and making him realize how important it is to find something to laugh about in every situation.

Daunte Culpepper

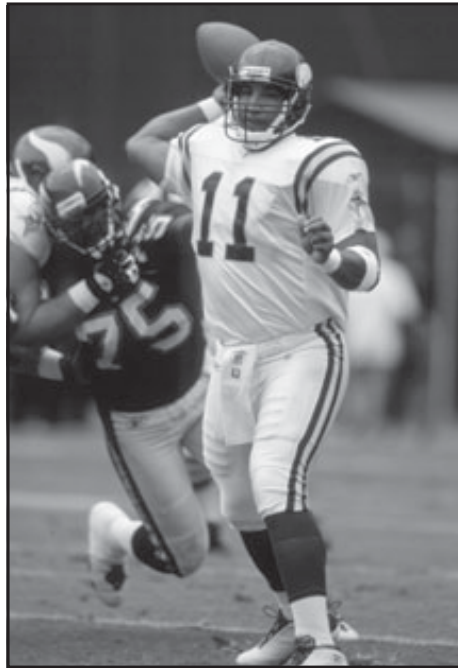


Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Vikings

As quarterback for the Minnesota Vikings, Daunte Culpepper makes quite an impact. He stands 6'4" and weighs 265 pounds. He runs a 4.6 second 40-yard dash and can jump 36 inches into the air and can throw the ball 80 yards. In 2003, Daunte signed a 10 year, \$102 million dollar contract with the team, the highest paying contract in team history and one of the highest in NFL history.

Culpepper gives much of the credit for his football success to his foster mother, Emma Culpepper. She raised him (and 14 other foster children) while his birth mother was imprisoned. Even after being reunified with his mom, Culpepper asked to move back to his foster mother.

Other famous foster kids

- Alonzo Mourning, NBA all star
- Anthony DiCosmo, pro football player
- Charlotte Ayanna, Miss Teen USA 1993 and actress
- Dan O'Brien, 1996 Olympic Gold Medal winner
- Esai Morales, actor
- Ice-T, rap artist and actor
- James Dean, actor
- John Lennon, musician
- Marilyn Monroe, actress
- Ruth Westheimer, psychologist and writer
- Superman, superhero
- Tom Monaghan, Domino's Pizza founder
- Tommy Davidson, comedian and actor
- Victoria Rowell, actress and dancer

Do you have news from your foster parent group?

Is there a Cook Region event coming up?

Do you know a Cook Region family to highlight?

Illinois Families Now and Forever wants to hear from you. Contact the regional reporter listed on page two.

Cook County Training Calendar

FosterPRIDE In-Service Training

All licensed foster parents and adoptive parents are welcome to attend any or all of the PRIDE In-Service Trainings to enhance their skills and meet yearly training requirements.

Module 1 - *The Foundation for Meeting the Developmental Needs of Children* (Four 3-hour sessions = 12 training hours)

Module 2 - *Using Discipline to Protect and Nurture* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 3 - *Child Development* - New module being written

Module 4 - *Child Sexual Development and Sexual Abuse* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

Module 5 - *Supporting Relationships Between Children and Their Families* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 6 - *Working as a Professional Team Member* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 7 - *Promoting Children's Personal & Cultural Identity* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

Module 8 - *Promoting Permanency Outcomes* (Three 3-hour sessions = 9 training hours)

Module 9 - *Managing the Fostering Experience* (Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hours)

Module 10 - *Understanding the Effects of Chemical Dependency on Children & Families* (Five 3-hour sessions = 15 training hours)

COOK NORTH

Module

Irish Center

June 5 (Sat) & June 12 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. 4
9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

COOK SOUTH

Module

Ada S. McKinley

June 21, 23 & 28 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. 2
(Mon/Wed)

Aunt Martha's

June 7, 9, 11 6:30-9:30 p.m. 4
(Mon/Wed/Fri)

COOK CENTRAL

Module

Circle Family Care

May 26 & June 2 6:30-9:30 p.m. 7
(Wed)
June 7, 9 & 14 6:30-9:30 p.m. 5
(Mon/Wed)

DCFS Harvey Office

June 19 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. 9

LSSI

June 14-16 6:30-9:30 p.m. 4
(Mon/Tue/Wed)

Educational Advocacy

Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hrs.

It is mandatory for one foster parent in each family to attend Educational Advocacy Training in order to be re-licensed. Educational Advocacy Training is offered following each Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE training and many additional times. This six hour course covers information foster parents need to know so that they can advocate for their foster children's educational rights and needs.

COOK NORTH

Irish Center

May 22 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

COOK CENTRAL

Circle Family Care

May 19 & 24 (Wed/Mon) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Association House (Spanish)

June 5 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

COOK SOUTH

DCFS South Area Office

June 5 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
June 17 & 22 (Thu/Tue) 6:30-9:30 p.m.
June 19 (Sat) 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
June 28 & 30 (Mon/Wed) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

DCFS Harvey Office

June 1 & 3 (Tue/Thu) 6:30-9:30 p.m.
June 14 & 16 (Mon/Wed) 6:30-9:30 p.m.

Church of the Holy Family

June 3 & 8 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
(Thu/Tue)

Cook County Advocate

Regional Reporters:

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All classes are coordinated by
Harold Washington College
in Chicago.

Call **312-553-5821**
or **-3031** to register.